

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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GENERAL

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1. Living conditions were much better in cities in the USSR, particularly Moscow, where everything was available.

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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STATE	#x	ARMY	#x	NAVY	#x	AIR	#x	FBI	AEC				
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COST OF LIVING

2. Perhaps the most important feature in the economy was in regard to the purchasing power of the wage earner. While salaries had remained stable from approximately 1947, prices had been cut repeatedly. For example, the price of a kilogram of butter in 1951 was 40 rubles, as compared to the 1946 price of 200 rubles. The same was true of most necessity items.
3. Whether the price situation was getting better or worse seemed to impress most Soviets much more than whether it was good or bad.
4. The most common foods on Gorodomlya Island were bread, potatoes, kasha, some sugar, and tea. (Kasha is a type of porridge and is made of rice, wheat, etc, and was sold packaged.) The Soviets rarely ate meat and fish.
5. [] the following prices were charged in state stores for the items indicated:

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<u>Item</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Price (in rubles)</u>
Bread, black	1 kg	2
Bread, grey	1 kg	3
Bread, white	1 kg	4.5 - 4.8
Sugar	1 kg	13
Butter	1 kg	35 (70 in open market)
Beef	1 kg	18
Mutton	1 kg	22
Pork	1 kg	25-30 (lean pork was cheaper)
Potatoes	1 kg	1.5 - 2.5
Man's suit		200 - 800
Suiting material	1 m	50 []
Men's shoes	1 pair	250-500

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Potatoes were generally sold on the open market and prices varied greatly at different times.

LABOR AND WORKING CONDITIONSTraining

6. Soviet apprentices assigned to the workshop in [] Gorodomlya remained for too short a period to permit adequate training. For example, too many tried to learn lathe or precision work in six months. Although they might then be able to pass the requisite examinations, they had but a smattering of knowledge when compared to what was required of such trainees []. The Soviets therefore might well learn one phase of a particular task but would be lost when a modification had to be made.

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Salaries

7. The minimum monthly salary of a Soviet common laborer was 300 rubles. The monthly wage of a semi-skilled worker was 800 rubles.
8. It would be difficult to consider the income of a "typical" Soviet family because usually there were several wage earners.

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Generally the husband and wife were both employed and the children entered apprenticeships and left home at the age of 12 - 14.

9. A farmer's wage in the Ostashkov area was very poor. For this reason the men frequently sought industrial employment and the women and children had to do the farming.

Controls

10. Norms were established for every type of work at Gorodomlya. Employees engaged in handwork felt that the time permitted to fulfill the norms was inadequate -- that no time was allowed for waiting in line for tools or cleaning them-- and they frequently complained. The Soviet workers often agreed with the timekeepers in order to have additional time allotted for the fulfillment of an assignment. Adjustments were usually made by allowing extra time for repairs and so the norm was considered filled.
11. [] all norms were standard. The norms were published and were considered applicable throughout the USSR. The practice of having norms such as these in the Soviet Union was introduced toward the end of 1949; prior to that time deadlines were merely set. [] the norm system is much more effective when applied to pure machine work. 25X1
12. Most of the Soviet workers [] were vague about the concept of Stakhanovism. 25X1
13. Internal working conditions or political indoctrination were the subjects discussed at the semi-weekly meetings held after working hours. These lectures, usually delivered by the union leaders who chaired the meetings, were held on the workers' "leisure" time. They were very unpopular and met with open dissatisfaction. However, the Soviets apparently did nothing to suppress the complaints.
14. Labor discipline in the USSR was effective because it was ruthlessly enforced. Absenteeism, slack work, and theft were made unprofitable because the punishments were so severe. The minimum punishment of forced labor, a sentence quite easily given, was two years. [] a worker who cut off a strip of leather from a conveyor belt to make a belt for himself [] was sentenced to seven years' forced labor for "stealing from the people's property". A lighter punishment, very common until 1950, was referred to as "6-25" which meant a 25 percent deduction from wages for six months. More current regulations prescribed a policy of some leniency in the application of labor discipline. On the whole, it seemed that tightening or loosening of labor discipline depended on the government's labor requirements. Immediately following World War II, when extensive reconstruction of cities was initiated, the government called on "volunteers" and also furnished much slave work. 25X1
15. The Soviets were always willing to ascribe to "sabotage" what usually was the result of a worker's attempt to fulfill excessive norms. It was true that machine tools [] 25X1

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[redacted] were often poorly adjusted and some parts were missing. However, [redacted] most of this defective work was due to workers' clumsiness when trying to be swift in meeting norms - not to acts of sabotage.

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16. The existence of Soviet slave labor camps was common knowledge although there were none in the Ostashkov region. [redacted] instances when individuals committed suicide rather than serve sentence in them. For example, a baker who had stolen flour was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in a forced labor camp and, rather than submit, took his life. The Soviets were most reluctant to speak of such camps [redacted] apparently ashamed of their existence. People who returned from forced labor camps were not likely to speak freely concerning them because, [redacted] they had been made to sign a statement to the effect that they would not speak of what they had seen. The most common offenses which resulted in such sentencing were black marketeering, embezzlement, or stealing.

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SOVIET REACTIONS AND ATTITUDES REGARDING LABOR CONDITIONS

17. The Soviet workers at Gorodomlya were permitted to vent their feelings in a workers' newspaper which was posted on a bulletin board. They submitted their articles to the managing committee. Complaints of all types were published; the only enforced restraint was on personal attacks, which were not permitted. The complaints were investigated and, where possible, corrected.
18. The Soviet workers were inclined to believe the propaganda directed to them in the press and over the radio which stated that they were the best paid in the world. They treated contrary statements as Western propaganda. The only exceptions were among those who had been abroad.

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19. If a worker was able to buy bread and vodka, which even the lowest-salaried group was usually able to do, he was fairly satisfied. However, the common laborers who earned but 300 rubles a month grumbled a great deal and said they were living like dogs.
20. As previously mentioned, the salaries which the farm workers received were very poor, particularly when compared with the wages of industrial employees. Therefore, the farmers tried to supplement their incomes by selling products on the open market, where they could charge higher prices. The severe punishments meted out for this as well as other misdemeanors were much disliked but, since they were so common, entailed no personal dishonor. As a matter of fact, [redacted] the Soviet worker was inclined to take these punishments with resignation, accepting them as one would the seasons.

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